

Addresses.

ON THE

OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION

OF THE

PORTRAIT OF GEORGE B. WOOD, M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE AND CLINICAL MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY
OF PENNSYLVANIA.

TO THE

WISTAR AND HORNER MUSEUM,

ON HIS

RETIREMENT FROM HIS CHAIR,

March 15, 1860.

BY

J. CAMPBELL SHORB, M. D.,

ON THE PART OF THE CLASS OF 1859-60,

AND

R. LA ROCHE, M. D.,

IN REPLY ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

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ADDRESS OF J. CAMPBELL SHORB, M. D.

THE Trustees, Medical Faculty, and Class of Graduates and Students of 1859-60, met in the Anatomical Lecture-Room of the University of Pennsylvania, on Thursday, March 15, 1860, at 10 o'clock A. M., to participate in the presentation of the portrait of Prof. GEORGE B. WOOD by the class to the Wistar and Horner Museum, when Dr. J. CAMPBELL SHORB, of Maryland, having been introduced, made the following

A D D R E S S.

GENTLEMEN: At an early period of the course of lectures just finished, the rumor was received by the class that Dr. Wood intended resigning his Professorship of the Theory and Practice of Medicine at the conclusion of the session. At first, many deemed such an event improbable, while others openly expressed their disbelief that such a loss would visit the University; but day by day, the rumor gained strength;

even the most incredulous began to be uneasy; statements from reliable sources reached us, and at last the sad truth came clearly out, that we were listening to the last lectures that Dr. Wood would ever deliver in his professorial capacity.

It is said that blessings—no matter how dearly cherished—brighten when they take their flight; and this truth was never better exemplified than by the feelings of the class when the unwelcome tidings came to us, that in a few short months our cherished and distinguished professor would leave us—perhaps forever. We then began to realize his high position among the master-spirits of medicine, the lustre he had shed on his profession, his popularity at home and abroad, and the fame his talents had brought to this, the greatest medical school in our country.

We began to recognize, in a stronger light, his wonderful powers as a lecturer; his perfect qualities as a teacher; the wisdom of his system of instruction; the clearness and completeness of his definition; his vivid exposition of disease, in all its varied shapes and forms; the simple elegance of his style, often eloquence, in description; the happy faculty of clearly communicating his ideas to his hearers, and making every subject easy, simple, and intelligible to all. We felt what a calamity his departure would be to the University, and the difficulty of finding a successor, who by his talents, labor, and success, could worthily fill the chair of the Theory and Practice of Medicine, rendered so illustrious by his great predecessor. Coupled with our sympathies for the school of our adoption, in the great loss she was about

to sustain, came the feelings of gratitude to Dr. Wood for the numberless benefits he had conferred upon us all.

It was under the promptings of this feeling, that a meeting was called in the University, on the evening of 29th of Nov. A preamble was read, expressive of the deep regret of the class at the departure of Dr. Wood, of our lasting gratitude to him, and of our desire that, as "a parting legacy," he would allow us to have his portrait painted, and placed in the Wistar and Horner Museum. Resolutions were read and adopted, appointing a committee to convey to Dr. Wood the wishes of the class. In a kind and grateful letter, he granted our request; the painting was immediately commenced, and finished some four or five weeks since.

The picture now stands before you. Of its artistic merits, of its truthfulness in delineating those loved and familiar features, we shall, of course, say nothing. It suffices that it meets with the approbation of its great original, and with this are we content. Our gratitude has not offered this tribute in the fear that time or oblivion would erase from the recollection of the medical world the name or mighty services of Dr. Wood. His name—his genius—is immortalized in his works, monuments "more lasting than brass," more durable than the lights and shades on yonder canvas. We have offered it, because it is most richly deserved, by every claim that moral worth, intellectual splendor, and highest professorial distinction, that unremitting zeal for our happiness and success, can have upon our veneration and gratitude.

And now, in behalf of the medical class of 1860, I present to you the portrait of Dr. George B. Wood, and request that it be placed in the Wistar and Horner Museum, in remembrance of him whose name posterity will not willingly let die; whose genius the University will ever love to recollect; whose career has been but a long series of brilliant successes; whose life is a model; whose example is, in every respect, most instructive; and, lastly, as a token of our deep and life-long gratitude.

REPLY OF R. LA ROCHE, M.D.

GENTLEMEN: As the representative of the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, I rise to accept with many thanks the present you have offered them, and to assure you that it shall be deposited in the place for which it was designed, and there occupy as prominent and honorable a position as can be selected. The hearty approval of ingenuous youth is an offering of which the most ambitious may well be proud. It is fresh and sincere, and cannot fail to be received in the same genial spirit in which it is given.

Nothing could be more gratifying to the governing body of this institution, as also to the faculty and friends of its medical department, than this testimonial on your part of warm attachment to, and respect, gratitude, and admiration for, the individual whose intelligent features are so vividly reflected from the canvas before us. They can never forget that, if henceforth, and for years after we have all disappeared from the stage of life, the visitor to the Wistar and Horner Museum, while gazing at this happy specimen of artistic skill, will be enabled to call to mind the long career of usefulness and honor of that individual, this benefit is due to the promptings of

your hearts, and to a correct appreciation, on your part, of the value of his teachings.

Nothing could be more acceptable, in every respect, than the delicate and courteous manner in which the act of donation has been made and the sentiments expressed by the member of your body you have so happily delegated as your organ on the occasion. Especially gratifying is it to myself to have been selected by the Board to acknowledge the pointed mark of distinction you are pleased, by your action in this matter, to confer on a member of the institution under their charge, for it has reference to one with whom I have been bound by the ties of a warm personal friendship, which, amid the excitement of professional life and academic discussion, has not experienced the slightest check during the long period of forty years or more, and whose reputation as a man of the strictest honor, as a teacher of medicine, as a practitioner, and an author, is and has ever been to me an object of the deepest interest.

Taking this into consideration, and bearing at the same time in mind an event which, as you all know, is about to occur in this school, you will readily understand that the proceedings in which we are at this moment engaged present to myself and colleagues an admixture of opposing elements—agreeable and gratifying feelings, and poignant regrets. The former derive their origin from the fact that, in the presentation of this portrait of your respected and admired teacher, in order that it may be placed among those of the illustrious men who have so greatly adorned the medical faculty, you have paid a high and flattering compliment

to, and conferred a well-merited honor on, one for whom we entertain sentiments of the sincerest and deepest regard. The counterbalancing effect grows out of the reflection, called up in our minds by the object of this meeting, that the presentation would probably not have suggested itself to the gentlemen composing the class of the closing session, were not the medical department of this school on the eve of being deprived of the further services of the distinguished professor whose claims to your and our lasting remembrance have been so glowingly and feelingly portrayed in your address.

To you, gentlemen, who have had the fullest opportunities, during your long attendance on his lectures, to appreciate the unusual merits of Dr. Wood as a teacher, I need scarcely say that by the Board of Trustees, as indeed by every individual connected with or simply taking an interest in this institution, his retirement is and must be viewed as entailing on the medical department one of the severest losses it could sustain. So far, indeed, as my individual opinion is concerned—and I know that many others, fully qualified to decide on matters of the kind, take the same view of the subject—I have no hesitation in stating that I regard that loss as almost irreparable under existing circumstances.

From the outset of his professorial life, some twenty-five years ago, Dr. Wood has, and I say it in all sincerity and uninfluenced by the desire to play the part of a flatterer, approved himself one of the brightest ornaments this school has ever had cause to boast of from the days of its foundation to the present hour. This is not trifling praise; for, as regards the special departments he has

had under his charge—those of the *materia medica* and of the theory and practice of medicine—we can hold up to the world with feelings of pride the names of a Rush, a Chapman, a Barton, a Dorsey. To have been the successor of such men, and to be admitted by universal consent not to have suffered in the comparison, is certainly indicative of the possession of powers calculated to justify the opinion I have expressed.

Indeed, I am in no fear of contradiction when I say that Dr. Wood would have attained a preëminent position, equal to the one he holds among us, in any school with which he might have been connected, whether in this country—where he has but few equals—or abroad. Men of the same stamp, combining, as he does, all the qualifications necessary to a successful discharge of the difficult and responsible duties of the chair he occupied, are not readily to be found; and it will, I fear, be no easy matter to discover an individual in every respect worthy of being his successor, and likely to fill with such entire success the vacancy created in the faculty by his resignation.

The task which devolves on the trustees of making selection of suitable individuals to fill vacancies occurring in the medical faculty is one in the performance of which, as will be admitted by all who have some knowledge of matters connected with the government of medical colleges, no inconsiderable degree of difficulty is invariably encountered.

In the present instance that difficulty cannot fail, from the circumstance of the unusual merits of the professor we are about to lose—the importance of the chair to be

filled and the consciousness that danger might accrue to the school were Dr. Wood's successor to prove inferior to his new position—to be in a great measure enhanced. Postulants for the post will, as a matter of course, present themselves. Each will, with no less certainty, think himself eminently qualified, on every score, to perform in the most unquestionable manner the duties of the vacated chair. Friends in, and especially out, of the ranks of the profession will be found disposed to urge the superior claims to preferment of their respective nominees, and ready to bring all manner of influences to bear on the minds of the trustees in order to effect the object they have in view.

I cannot allow myself for a moment to doubt that, from among the number of individuals whose names will be enrolled on the list of candidates, a fair selection can be made. So far from this, I feel convinced, that the said list will clearly indicate that the place in the gift of the trustees is sought after by more than one individual entitled to the favorable opinion of those best able to pronounce in regard to their intellectual endowments and scientific acquirements. All I wish to impress on your minds is that, owing to the reasons mentioned, the task of sifting the claims of the various aspirants to an office from which a professor like the original of that fine portrait is about to retire—of steering safely amid all the external influences from which none having a voice in the decision can hope to escape, and at last of selecting from among all the competitors the individual least likely to suffer to such a degree by a comparison

with his predecessor as to lower the reputation of the school will be one replete with difficulties.

Under the influence of this conviction, and fully alive to the fear that the hope of finding a person coming up fully to the standard set up before us all by Dr. Wood may not be easily realized, the Board of Trustees feel that a heavy responsibility rests upon them—a responsibility rendered the more serious, from the knowledge of the circumstance that, living, as we do, in times of active competition, it now perhaps more than ever behooves medical colleges—and ours not less than others—to seek every opportunity of strengthening themselves by the selection of men most distinguished for extensive professional learning, practical experience, and decided abilities in the art of teaching, to say nothing of sound sense, courteous and affable manners, and proper tact and discretion in their intercourse with their pupils.

Arduous and difficult, however, as the task may prove, the Board of Trustees will not be remiss in the performance of their duty; and will, as far as in their power lies, make a selection satisfactory to the students, who seek instruction among us, and to the profession at large, and the result of which will be, if not to enhance, at least to secure, untarnished, the high character the medical department of this Institution has so long enjoyed.

Most certainly would the members of the Board of Trustees, in their corporate or private capacity, have endeavored to dissuade Dr. Wood from accomplishing so early, his intention of retiring from the school. But, influ-

enced by a feeling of delicacy, and fully aware that their efforts would be fruitless, they forbore. He had, as he thought, ample reasons to conclude that his personal comfort and happiness, and those of objects dear to him, could be more securely attained by relinquishing the arduous and binding duties he had so conscientiously and satisfactorily performed in the school during a long succession of years. He had announced, long since, his intention of retiring before he should be incapacitated—through the infirmities of age, or the encroachments of ill-health—from enjoying a lengthened visit to foreign climes. And now the sad hour of separation is fast approaching. With a mind as clear and grasping as in the days of his early manhood; with a body as yet but little impaired by the influence of advancing years; and with the consciousness of having reaped all the honors in the gift of the profession, he calmly closes his professorial career. He goes from among us, but not without carrying along with him the best and most sincere wishes of the entire Board of Trustees for the full realization of all his earthly aspirations, together with the parting expression of their full appreciation of his moral worth, of his high-toned professional conduct, of his exemplary social and domestic virtues, of his gentlemanly and dignified deportment, and of his elevated position as an author of refined taste, and deep and accurate knowledge; as, also, of the zeal and intense-ness of purpose he has always brought into exercise for the instruction of his class, of his unremitting efforts to raise and maintain, by precept and example, the status of the medical profession in this city and country, and

to uphold the honor and reputation of the school with which he had so long been connected, and on which he has so largely contributed to shed an imperishable lustre.

In closing this brief, and, I fear, imperfect reply, to the considerate and feeling address with which we have been favored, I must be permitted to congratulate you all, gentlemen, for the high character of the class during the past session. In like manner must I congratulate those among you who are this day to receive the honors of the doctorate, for the distinguished manner in which they have passed the ordeal of their examinations. I but repeat what has been reported to me by your preceptors, when I say, with the view that the fact may be widely spread, that seldom has this school had occasion to boast of so intelligent and attentive a class, and of a set of graduates so well calculated to do full credit to their Alma Mater.

REMARKS OF GEORGE B. WOOD, M. D.

DR. WOOD made in substance the following remarks:

“I have prepared no written address on this occasion, and should be pleased could I be allowed to be a silent spectator; but, under the circumstances, I feel called upon to say a few words, such as the occasion may prompt, to thank you for this proof of your kind feelings towards me.

“When the heart is full, it is not always easy to command either our thoughts or the expression of them; and I am at a loss for words to say how much I am affected by your estimation of my character and services. I do not, however, wish it to be supposed that I consider myself entitled to the commendation which has been bestowed upon me. I am well aware of how much allowance must be made, in reference to the sentiments of the class so glowingly expressed by their eloquent representative, for the warm and generous feelings of youth, and in reference to the approving remarks of the gentleman who spoke last, for the natural exaggerations of a friendship so long and so intimate as that which has existed between him and myself. Yet, I will not deny that I have done much hard work in the

course of my life, and that, in doing it, I have endeavoured to be guided by a sense of duty, and to aim at objects higher than those of a purely selfish character. Perhaps I may be allowed to draw from my experience a lesson, which may not be without its value to the younger among my hearers. One of the highest gratifications of my whole life, whether in its progress, or in a retrospect of the past, has been that derived from labour in the accomplishment of what I conceived to be useful ends. Let me, therefore, impress on you the importance to your own happiness, even in this world, of engaging energetically in useful labour, such as may be in accordance with your convictions of duty. Twenty years hence, should you follow this advice, you will, I confidently assure you, rejoice in having preferred a life of hard work directed towards noble objects, to one of idleness or self-indulgence.

“But I cannot leave this subject, after listening to the flattering compliments lavished on me, without confessing to you that I am conscious of many and great deficiencies; that I have let many opportunities of being useful escape, of which I ought to have availed myself; that I have left undone many things which I ought to have done, and, I fear, have done not a few things which would have been better left undone; that, in fine, in my course of life there has been much occasion for forgiveness from that Being, from whom alone forgiveness can come.

“To turn to the portrait which is the occasion of the present meeting, I cannot but feel very highly gratified by knowing that it is to be placed by the side of the

portraits of those great men who founded and have supported this school, that, whenever you or your successors may walk through the splendid museum in which it is to be deposited, my remembrance will be called up in the mind in association with that of my illustrious predecessors. But, my friends, in a comparatively short period of time, the colours of these pictures will fade ; in a few centuries the canvas itself will probably fall into dust, and perhaps the very names of these eminent persons may exist no longer in the memory of man. One recollection, however, will remain. The impression made upon my heart by your kindness will continue, I assure you, unimpaired throughout what may be spared to me of life ; and, when life is passed, I sincerely hope that I may be permitted to bear it with me into eternity.

“Allow me once more most heartily to thank you, and to offer my sincere wish that you may enjoy long and prosperous lives, that all your just hopes may be realized, and all your noble aspirations gratified. Farewell.”

